



THE STORY OF THE BATTLE OF STONY CREEK

BY

E. B. BIGGAR, ESQ.

(AS PUBLISHED IN THE SPECTATOR, JUNE, 1873)

Hamilton, June 5th, 1889.

INTRODUCTORY.

At midnight of the 26th of May, 1813, the Americans, after a long time spent in preparation, completed their final arrangements for the attack on the town and forts at the mouth of the Niagara. The town was then called Newark or Fort George; and the structure which overlooked the extreme mouth of the river, immediately below the present town of Niagara, was known as Fort Massassauga. Covered by a dense fog the American troops embarked in vessels from Fort Niagara directly opposite Newark, early on the morning of the 27th. To cover the embarkation and attack a heavy cannonade was opened from Fort Niagara, assisted by broadsides from two schooners which had been brought across the river by means of sweeps for the purpose of quieting the two cannon that had been planted on the river bank near Fort George; by broadsides from another which appeared to the north of the lighthouse, close to the shore, so as to enfilade the battery and cross the fire of the other two schooners; and by five schooners, a frigate, and a brig which anchored off the shore to the north so as to cover the landing of the troops. Maj.-Gen. Dearborn commanded the Americans in this expedition, but did not land in person to head the attack. Brigadier-General John Vincent commanded on the side of the British. Col. Scott was appointed to lead the vanguard of the Americans, supported by several divisions of riflemen, infantry and artillery. The reserve consisted of Macomb's artillery, and marines from the squadron, and 400 seamen under Commodore Chauncey, making in all an active force of 6,000 men. To oppose this the British had about 1,000 men, composed of regulars, militia and Indians. But the disparity in numbers was not the only disadvantage the British had to contend with; the fortifications were insufficient; indeed, scarcely tenable. They were short of powder—so much so that "the guns of Fort George were compelled to remain silent while Commodore Chauncey

was sounding the shore that (previous) evening within half gunshot;" the men were exhausted from their long and severe duty in watching for the long expected invasion—strong guards had lined the river and lake banks both night and day, for an indefinite time before this, and the duty is remembered by all to have been the severest of the year; and, worse than all, the heavy fog that shrouded everything on the morning of the conflict made it impossible to discover from which quarter the attack of the enemy was to be expected. Under this unfortunate aspect Vincent disposed his men so as to protect all sides of his position. Col. Harvey was posted to the right of Fort George, his detachment extending along the river as far as what was then known as Brown's Point; Col. Myers was stationed to the left, or west side of Fort Massassauga, to repel any attack made from Lake Ontario; the General himself took command of the centre, occupying the fort and town; and a few companies were placed in the rear to prevent a surprise from the ravines inland from the river and lake. Had the Americans exhibited a little of the "strategy" to which they boastfully attributed their successes over their Southern brethren in their late civil war, they might have cut off Vincent's retreat entirely by sweeping the Queenston road, and have made the whole British army prisoners. The battle of Stony Creek would then not have been fought, and presuming that the Americans would still have held York (the former name of Toronto, then in the hands of the Americans), the whole Upper Province would have fallen into the possession of the enemy. But the incapacity of the American General saved—in this instance as in many others during the war—the Canadians from disaster and possible subjugation. The cannon had been booming long before daylight, but the enemy were not discovered until approaching daylight, when, through the stagnant mist they were seen approaching off the Four-mile

Creek close to the lake shore. But the fog rendered it impossible to ascertain their movements across the river, or, indeed, not more than 50 or 60 yards away. In about one hundred boats and scows they pulled swiftly to the shore, and, after some opposition from a detachment of British, effected their landing. As the morning advanced the mist began to roll away, and the movements of the enemy became more evident. Vincent, seeing the attack was meditated from the lake side only, collected his men between Fort George and the shore, and waited their approach. They moved upon him in three solid columns, supported by artillery. It was here that the hardest part of the fighting was done; but the same stubborn bravery, the same reckless daring in the face of an outnumbering foe that had characterized the heroes of Queenston Heights, became the mark of distinction now. At length, after sustaining a severe loss in officers and men, and pressed hard by superior numbers, Vincent deemed it best to evacuate the forts, which was done when they had spiked the guns and destroyed the ammunition. The British then retreated in order to Beaver Dams, by way of Queenston. In this retreat about 50 regulars were unhappily made prisoners; making the total loss of the British, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, 445. The Americans lost 150 in killed and wounded.

Vincent sent orders to Col. Bishopp, who then held Fort Erie, and Major Ormsby, who commanded at Chippewa to evacuate their posts and join him at Beaver Dams; the same orders were conveyed to Capt. Barclay, R. N., who commanded a body of seamen; to two companies of the 8th or King's, and to all the militia in that part of the country. They impressed into their service all the wagons they could find on their way, and by the morning of the 28th the whole force along the line had gathered at the Dams. This place was used as a sort of a depot for military stores, provisions, and ammunition. (It was here that the information brought by our Canadian heroine, Mrs. James Secord, was the means of surprising and capturing Colonel Boerstler's division of 500 troops, 50 cavalry, and two guns.) The troops were assembled on this morning and the militia and volunteers were surprised to hear from the commander that they were at liberty to return to their homes if they chose. An intimation so strange and unexpected struck them with astonishment and disappointment, as they fully thought, now that the scattered forces were concentrated in a body, that a determined attempt would be made to recover Newark and drive the Americans from the land. This unusual proceeding appeared the more singular as the militia had for some time previous considered themselves indifferently treated; but the mystery was soon made clear. They were told that the army was now about to retreat, and were given to understand that it would not permanently stop till it arrived at Kingston—in other words, the peninsula or Upper Province was to be abandoned. The impressment of the wagons, the destruction of the spare stores, the treatment of the militia, and the unpursued (as yet) retreat of the army, as well as incidents in the course of official conduct at the time, go to prove that it really was their determination to withdraw the troops from the western frontiers, and perhaps leave it a prey to our acquisitive neighbors. This was

the firm belief of William H. Merritt, who said in his "Journal of the War of 1812:" "I strongly suspected, from the indifferent manner in which the militia were treated, that that part of the Upper Province was to have been abandoned, which opinion was entertained by most people. * * * I felt in a sad dilemma. The thought of abandoning the country, and leading everything that was near and dear to me, was most distressing." It is a pity that this truth must be told and another indirect stain cast on the military name of Sir George Prevost. Some few of the militia took advantage of the liberty given them and stayed to protect their families; others followed the army in its retreat westward. Many were the scenes of sorrow and distress exhibited to the little army as they passed on, leaving behind them the unprotected and defenceless women and children who expected the Americans would invade and take possession of the land; and sadly thought their husbands and friends who left them that day would no more return to press the ground of their homesteads as Britons.

They passed DeCue's—a large two-storey stone house used as a small military stopping place—and late at night arrived at the 40-mile Creek, now Grimsby. Early the next morning Vincent sent Capt. W. H. Merritt with ten of his mounted yeomen to reconnoitre the enemy and ascertain how far they had advanced. With these men he proceeded cautiously to the 12-mile Creek, and there found that an advance of 40 or 50 American horsemen had made their way as far as De Cue's, but had not appeared in force. Having sent his men back to Vincent with this news he went alone to his home, following the lake road, where he remained till midnight, then taking a tender farewell of his family he retraced his steps to the 40-mile Creek. On arriving here he received an order from the army which had reached Burlington Heights on the night of the 29th, to remain with a few mounted militiamen until driven away by the enemy. He had not long to wait. On the afternoon of that day (May 30th) they had marched within three miles of him; and a party of thirty horsemen coming on his position obliged him to retire before them. On his joining the main body at the Heights a relief of picquets under Capt. Williams was sent out, he taking a position at Barton, to recruit. These picquets were driven in farther and farther, until, at last, they were chased up as far as Big Creek, a stream not more than four miles east of Hamilton. This was on the afternoon of June 5th.

ADVANCE OF THE AMERICANS.

When Vincent retreated towards Queenston he was followed by the American Col. Scott, who succeeded, as was before stated, in making prisoners of 50 British regulars. As soon as they had taken possession of the now dismantled and untenable fort and town (consisting of a few ruined houses), Gen. Dearborn was informed that Col. Proctor was on his way from the Detroit frontier to effect a junction with Gen. Vincent at Burlington Heights. Supposing this information to be correct Dearborn proposed to despatch part of his army to cut off Vincent's retreat and thus prevent their joining. This was agreed upon and Gen. Winder, at his own request, was appointed to the duty. Accordingly he set out, but took the wrong road and was obliged to return. This caused a

ruinous delay of two days, by which time Vincent had gained the Heights, and of course the idea of heading the retreat was then given up. Dearborn's intention was to transport his troops to Burlington Bay by the fleet, "but," says Auchinleck, "the cabinet at Washington had given this arm of the expedition a different direction." So two more days were spent in unresulting deliberations as to how to proceed. I will be pardoned for digressing somewhat from the subject to remark that it was fortunate for the British that they were opposed by the commander that they were. Gen. Dearborn was a man much advanced in years and was suffering from ill health at the time. In his younger days he had distinguished himself in the Revolution as a man of activity and daring; but was now in his dotage almost, and had he even possessed physical health and full powers of mind, it is doubtful if his abilities as a leader would have been equal to the task before him. His manoeuvres at the taking of York were ill-planned in the extreme, and his action in this and succeeding enterprises, clumsier and more ill-planned. The old general was recalled from his command just a month after the battle of Stony Creek, and Gen. Wilkinson, another old and equally incompetent leader, appointed as his successor.

Again General Winder started with a brigade in pursuit of the British. This brigade which included a corps of dragoons; Col. Burns' detachment of cavalry (stated by G. Auchinleck to number 250); and Archer's and Towson's artillery, amounted to only 800 men, according to J. B. Lossing, the writer of "Sketches of the War, 1812." Another American work, however, states them at 1,450. Winder pushed rapidly on to the 20-mile Creek, at which place he was told that Vincent was posted strongly at Burlington Heights, and had received reinforcements from Kingston. Believing this (an invention, no doubt, of some unscrupulously patriotic denizen) to be true, he halted in his pursuit, and sent a request to Dearborn for more troops. In compliance with this another brigade was sent, under the command of General Chandler, who being the senior officer, took the chief command on his arrival. Lossing says that Chandler's brigade counted 500 men, making the total American force 1,300. Auchinleck, the Canadian historian of the war, with a fairer appearance of accuracy, puts them down at 3,450. W. H. Merritt, speaking of them as encamped at Stony Creek, says there were "2,000 on a hill to the right of the road, and 500 in the lane to the left, in advance of their artillery" (and cavalry, which numbered 250). Placing the artillery at the moderate number of 350, there would then be a 3,100. Besides these, a body of troops, whose number is unknown, came up the lake in seven *en batteaux*. Reducing the conflicting statements of a dozen different authorities to a fair average, the two brigades could not have been less than 2,800 men. Chandler and Winder now moved forward to the 40-mile Creek, where they drove off the mounted militiamen under Copt. Merritt. Having here ascertained more accurately the position and strength of the British they proceeded on their march, and towards evening on the 5th of June they arrived tired, hungry and thirsty, at a place which was soon to be the scene of disaster and defeat to themselves, but a most brilliant and glorious success for the British—Stony Creek.

Before giving a view of the subsequent incidents it may be well to give some idea of what constituted Stony Creek and Burlington Heights, so that the reader may better understand the relative position and surroundings of the two armies. Neither of these two places had any claims at that time to the title of village even. Stony Creek was a stream which took its rise in a swampy tract of woodland some miles beyond or south of that ridge of land known as the "mountain," the same ridge over which the great Niagara thunders, and winding north-west poured over this; then running northward through the present village emptied into a small lagoon which stretches in from the shore of Lake Ontario. The creek is not perennial but in the spring and fall a most beautiful falls is formed at the escarpment where the water pours over from its summit in one unbroken descent of 80 or 100 feet. The great, symmetrical regular oval wall of grey rocks from whose summit the water pours into a rocky basin beneath; the majestic evergreen crown of pines and hemlocks encircling and overlooking its brow with conscious imperiousness; the undergrowth that overhangs and fringes like a valance the rugged edge of rocks; and further on the the shrubbery which carpets the steep banks of the canon that gazes on the rich valley beneath; and the grand and picturesque boulders piled confusedly together (and which bear still on their faces the evidence of a primeval submersion under the waters of old Ontario) make up a picture which the traveler might look upon hundreds of times without losing any of its variety or enchanting picturesqueness. After leaving the foot of the falls its waters dash gaily down over rocky ledges to the level below and then course over a complete bed of small, loose stones to its outlet. From this it derives its name of "Stoney Creek." Our ancestors spelt it "Stoney," and that error is now a confirmed custom with the inhabitants, though it has been discarded in this sketch. A narrow, crooked, rough road ran west from from Queenston to the Heights, and around the lake to York and Kingston. On this road, hard by Stony Creek, lived Edward Brady, who kept a small log tavern. About a hundred yards east of the Creek and nearly opposite him, lived Stephen Jones (father of the present Judge of the County of Brant), who also kept a log tavern. Another log shanty was built close to this, but the occupant's name is in oblivion. Adam Green, (after whom Greenville is called) lived on the hill in a log house west of the creek, on the spot now occupied by H. Spearle's house. Just below this on the bank was an old water-power saw-mill. Nearly a half mile west of the creek, and overlooking the battle ground from a hill on the south was James Gage's house; his brother William lived some distance across the road on another hill. The house of the latter is the only one that still stands entire, as it stood then. Nearly between these two, close by the road was a little log cabin in which a man named Lappin lived. An unfinished frame house (said to be the only frame house in the parts except one) stood by the Creek. There was only one more building besides these, but it was the finest and best of all. It was the old church.

"It stood upon a hill; a gentle hill,
Green, and of mild declivity,"

and in the centre of what is now the graveyard, a yard then dotted by scarce a tomb-

stone. It was built by the Wesleyan Methodists, and was, with the single exception of the Grand River stone chapel, the oldest church in Western Ontario, or (it is said) in the whole Province. Long before the year 1800 the settlers used to come a distance of twenty or thirty miles to listen to itinerant preachers in this church. It was built with the labor of the settlers and without money; its clapboarded sides never saw paint; its inside walls never knew plaster or whitewash; its humble altar glittered with not an ornament, no great chandelier shed its light on a fashionably dressed audience at night, nor organ pealed its thundering accompaniment to a trained choir! Its only steeple was the chimney top that towered over its old fireplace—for there were no foundries or stoves then. Still its pious congregation looked proudly upon it as a grand edifice. (Years after the war it was repaired and refitted, however and was still the finest chapel in this part of the country. It was torn down in 1871.) Two miles west of Stony Creek William Davis kept a tavern, near the bank of the Big Creek close by the road. It was here that Colonels Harvey and Murray boarded for a time during the war. The story is told how an awkward and verdant youth named McNabb (afterwards Sir Allan) was introduced to Murray in this house, and became so confused in being presented to one whom he thought so great a man that he kicked over his chair in rising; and how he afterwards said he believed he would have rushed out of the house had he not been brought to his senses by a grim smile of assurance from Murray. Farther up the road was another house—still standing on the present site of Bartonville—then the only representative house of that village. Farther yet was Mr. Aikman's place, and shortly beyond a stone habitation, the ruins of which have been lately pulled down.

As near as I have been able to ascertain, the ground on which the city of Hamilton now stands was then owned as follows: Geo. Hamilton, after whom the city was named, owned 200 acres south of the road—which is now King street, and east of James street. Bounding this on the north and extending from James to Wellington streets was Hughson's farm, whose name is still preserved in Hughson street. These two farms were bounded on the west by the property of William Wedge; and on the east by the farms of Ephraim and Col. Robert Land. Though these were called "farms," nothing grew on them but a low undergrowth, indicative of marshy ground, called "scrubby oak." A man named Barns kept tavern in a small frame house on the present corner of King and James streets, and was said to own 100 acres of land somewhere in that part. This old signless frame tavern may be said to have been the germ and beginning of the city of Hamilton. These buildings enumerated, planted in the midst of an unhewn forest, like so many islands in an ocean, were all that then was of Stony Creek and Hamilton—a name then unknown as a locality. That part of Hamilton now known as "Dundurn Castle" was termed the Heights as well as the high land on the other side of the canal. On the grounds around the site of the castle, and in other places entrenchments were cut and trees felled for some distance around, with their branches pointing outward, as a sort of *cheval-de-frise*, traces of which

may yet be seen in the present cemetery. And behind these entrenchments was Vincent's camp.

It has been said that the Americans reached Stony Creek late in the afternoon of the 5th of June, 1813. One of the British dragoons who had been stationed a distance below the Creek as a look-out came riding through the hamlet at full gallop, firing his pistol and shouting that the enemy were coming. As he was a notorious liar the alarm was received doubtfully. Another dragoon, John Brady, rode eastward, upon this, to reconnoitre, and ere he had advanced half-a-mile suddenly came upon them. A short distance before him a deer path ran down to the road from the mountain, and this he resolved to gain in the face of the enemy. Putting spurs to his horse, he rode up, screened by the fire of two log heaps that were burning by the road, and firing off his piece at them, darted up the deer path to the mountain. As he wheeled several muskets answered his own shot, but the bullets whistled harmlessly by or struck the intervening trees. Brady climbed the mountain and in less than two hours was at Vincent's camp at Burlington Heights. The advance cavalry of the Americans soon pranced up before Brady's tavern; when among other things, they appropriated the family's bread that had been freshly baked the same afternoon. The clattering of cavalry hoofs, the clanking of swords, the heavy rattle of the artillery, and the long and strange array of invading soldiers as they filed along the narrow road struck the few inhabitants of the hamlet with wonder and astonishment. It was soon whispered about among them that a battle was to be fought the next day, and as may be expected the wives and maidens of the vicinity were in great consternation. Arrived at the old church the advance encountered Capt. Williams, whom they drove to the west side of the Big Creek. Williams and his men mounted the west bank of the Big Creek and, firing from thence, killed one man and mortally wounded another, who was carried into Davis' tavern. The sun was getting low in the west as the advance and part of the main body found themselves on a piece of high and uneven land surrounded by a dense forest where it was impossible to camp on account of the impenetrable underwood—unless it would be in the contracted limits of the road. Under these circumstances the men were ordered to fall back on Stony Creek. Soon after they had gone an American surgeon was sent to attend the wounded man at Davis'. He seemed in great excitement; swore at the men under his charge for not hurrying to obey his orders; and was sure they would all be scalped if they did not get away at once. So the wounded man was tumbled into one of the beds and they rattled off in their wagon, bed and all. It seems he had heard the shouts of Williams' men and imagined them to be Indians. (Without discussing the question of cruelty and savagery practiced by the Indians on both sides during this war it will be proper to mention that the Americans stood in singular dread of the British Indians, and were in constant terror of the scalping knife, to which feeling was owing partly their defeat in this conflict, though, be it remembered, not a solitary Indian was in the battle.) It is related that some of the men on their way back to Stony Creek stopped at a well to drink. One of them said to a comrade, "I

think I will take this piece of land (pointing to a small clearing) when Canada is conquered." This man was found the next day among the slain. The poor fellow is still waiting for his farm beneath an apple-tree that sheds its bloom at each returning 6th of June over the ground where the soldiers were buried.

A small tributary stream of Stony Creek ran down past Gage's house, distant about half a mile at that point from the main stream, and was enclosed by a low level, woodless strip of ground called the "flat," which was itself walled in on either side by an abrupt bank about ten feet high. The road at this place was not then graded, but pitched immediately down these banks; and it was on the eastern one that Chandler ordered his cannon to be planted, so that they might sweep the road to the west. On each side of the road, near the guns, slept the artillerymen. Immediately in the rear of this (Towson's) artillery, Col. Burns and his cavalry camped. In a cleared field south of the road towards Gage's house, a body of nearly 2,000 Americans pitched their tents, stretching along and above the bank; 500 lay in a lane in the flat west of the stream and to the right front of the artillery. Archer's artillery and another body of men occupied a position towards the lake. And finally, in advance of the rest a party of about 50 took possession of the old church. All the settlers in the vicinity were taken and held as prisoners lest they should carry any information to Vincent. Three of them (whose names I could mention) were confined in Lappin's log cabin, in uncomfortable proximity to the cannon, and a guard placed over them. Chandler, Winder and some of the principal officers occupied Gage's house (while the family were put down cellar) and used his barn and outhouses as store-rooms for their baggage. The troops were ordered to sleep on their arms that night; the cannon stood in readiness to sweep the road; and full directions were given by Chandler when and how to form in line of battle should any attack be made. Thus for the first time, the tents of a Canadian enemy were spread upon Stony Creek ground, and for the first time the smoke of an enemy's camp fires arose on Wentworth air! The men took their much-needed supper, and lay down upon their arms weary and exhausted from their long, tiresome day's march. The noise and bustle of the camp gradually died out, as the men sought their rest, and the darkness closed in. Characteristic of June the night was hot and breezeless, as the day had been clear and sultry. There was no moon; the horizon on all quarters was entombed in a mountain of dark clouds from which the "heat lightning" shot out at intervals, and illumined the tree-tops with its dull flickering glare. Soon the men were asleep, and the only sounds to be heard were the sullen tread of the sentinels, the distant wail of some bird or animal, and the dying crackle of the camp fires, which revealed indistinctly the grey pyramids around them, and the forms of outlying soldiers.

Let us now leave the Americans to the slumber which was fated to be so suddenly and abruptly broken, and follow the motions of the British.

Towards evening Vincent had sent out Col. John Harvey, his deputy-adjutant general, for the purpose of reconnoitring the enemy. Taking ensigns McKenny and George, two officers

of W. H. Merritt's company, he went forward with the light companies of the 49th, and met Williams' company at Big Creek. While Harvey, George and McKenny were ascending the east bank of the creek in advance of the men, they came upon an American with a British prisoner. The American leveled his piece to fire on them, when Harvey called out to the British soldier to seize him, which was no sooner said than the gun was wrested from him, and the captor was captive. Harvey lent his pistol to George Bradshaw, he being without small arms, and the American, whose name was Vanderberg, was conducted by him to the presence of Vincent. The British soldier had strayed from the road in the early part of the day, returned without knowing that the enemy had advanced so far, and was seen and seized. The reconnoitring party now went cautiously forward to a position from which they could view the enemy. Here they saw that the extended line of encampment of the enemy was scantily guarded, was scattered and disconnected, the artillery poorly supported, and the cavalry placed awkwardly in the rear of the artillery. McKenny and George both suggested a night sortie upon them. Harvey saw at once the feasibility of it and concurred. Harvey has always been looked to as the first who proposed this scheme of night attack, but the honor of it really belongs to these two, McKenny claiming to have spoken of it first (see W. H. M.'s "Journal"). At night they returned and proposed the night attack to Vincent, who without much deliberation moved to carry it into effect. He acceded to it more readily as he knew full well how very critical his situation was. York was in the grasp of the enemy and an active and powerful fleet was on the lake to oppose him. And should he delay action till the next day an outnumbering army would be on his position at the very time when he had but ninety rounds of ammunition for each man. W. H. Merritt, who understood perfectly well the state of affairs, spoke of it thus: "All my hopes depended on this bold enterprise, for had we not attacked them they would have advanced the next morning, and in all probability we would have retired without risking an action, as our force was not one-third of theirs. Proctor and the whole upper country would then have fallen." It was the result, then, of this night attack upon the enemy that was to decide the fate of the western portion of the Province.

An order to move forward startled the sleeping officers and men from the grass where on they were reposing, and instantly the camp was alive with preparations to march. It was about half-past ten that the last of the brave seven hundred and four who were to honor themselves and their posterity in this daring encounter, disappeared from the waning light of their campfires down the lonely road eastward. Stealthily they took their way beneath the grand wall of trees that rose on either side of the road, and in places arched together overhead, closing them in profound night and darkness. As the little phalanx wound along their sinuous path toward the enemy's encampment not a word was spoken nor a sound of any kind escaped their ranks. On they stole down the west bank of Big Creek, then up the eastern like a train of noiseless ghosts. Just as they arrived at Davis's the slumbering echoes of the woods awoke upon their ears with the sound of a gun, in the very direction of the enemy. The whole body halted almost

without the word of command. This report called for increased caution; some information was gleaned from Davis; and an order went around to have the charges drawn from every gun, lest by some accident they should go off, and perhaps defeat the only scheme by which they could hope for success. They now formed into sections, and with the light companies of the 49th in the van and Vincent at the head of the rear column, they once more proceeded. Their movements were now attended with greater caution, for they were not certain that the report heard was not an alarm at their approach. They arrived in sight of the first sentry at nearly two o'clock on Sunday morning (6th). Col. Harvey, who was to conduct the attack, was in front of the light companies with another man of the 49th, and observed the sentry reclining against a tree which leaned partially over the road about a hundred yards west of the church. I have never been able to discover for a certainty whether the countersign was obtained; or if it was, how it was done. Lossing asserts that it "was obtained from a treacherous dweller near, who by false pretences had procured and conveyed it to General Vincent." In contradiction to this a "49th man" gives his printed testimony as follows: "I had been driven in that afternoon from Stony Creek, and was well acquainted with the ground. The cautious silence observed [speaking of their march down] was most painful: not a whisper was permitted; even our footsteps were not allowed to be heard. I shall never forget the agony caused to the senses by the stealthiness with which we proceeded to the midnight slaughter. I was not aware that any other force accompanied us than the Grenadiers, and when we approached near the Creek I ventured to whisper to Col. Harvey, 'We are close to the enemy's camp, sir!' 'Hush! I know it,' was his reply. Shortly after a sentry challenged; Dieu, Danford, and the leading section rushed forward and killed him with their bayonets; his bleeding corpse was cast aside, and we moved on with breathless caution. A second challenge 'Who comes there?'—another rush, and the poor sentinel is transfixed, but his agonized groans alarmed a third who stood near the watch-fire; he challenged and immediately fired and fled." Not a moment was now to be lost. Harvey, whose plans had been perfectly organized before starting, instantly ordered his men to deploy into line. He and Col. Fitzgibbon took the road straight ahead; Major Plenderleth swept round to the left, and Major Ogilvie with a party of the 49th opened to the right. In the meantime the sentry at the church door had been approached in the shade of the trees and killed, and the whole party—who were lying in all parts of the church with their heads peacefully pillowed on their coats and boots—were made prisoners. The excitement of the men, wrought by subdued silence, was now at its greatest intensity. With wild and terrific yells they burst with fixed bayonets into the flats upon the astonished Americans. The frenzied outburst of voices seemed to fairly shake the woods; and in the next short minute the whole flats and the opposite hill was a scene of crazy commotion and disorder. The five hundred in the lane flew madly to the hill, leaving their blankets, knapsacks and some of their arms behind. The British halted at the deserted camp-fires of the enemy to load their guns and replace

their flints, which some of them had taken out for safety. While this was being done, Col. Fitzgibbon rushed up to the cannon, saw that the artillerymen were not yet by them, hurried back and ordered the captain of the first company to charge upon them. The company was at once on the double-quick march in the face of the guns; but hardly had they gone twenty feet before a man sprang to touch off one of the cannons. It hung fire; the captain yelled to his men to "break off from the centre or they would all be killed," but the words had no more than gone from his lips when the thundering explosion came, and, not his men, but the captain himself and two of his officers lay dead in the road. By this time the Americans had somewhat recovered from their first confusion, and while the British were still loading, the dark hill, for nearly a half-mile in extent, was suddenly illuminated with a crashing volley. It was a grand and awful sight; none but those who actually witnessed it can form a true conception of the ghastly sublimity of the spectacle. Following the dreadful flash and crash came a silence yet more impressive, broken though by the clinking of ramrods and groans of the wounded and dying. Now an ominous faint "click click-click!" rattles along the gloomy hill, succeeded by another echoing roar of musketry, and a shock of artillery; and again the trees, the tents, and everything about lives as in a momentary day; and again the whizzing bullets are followed by moans and dying words. But now the flashes come from the flats also, and from simultaneous volleys the firing runs into an incessant roar, the hill and valley are continuous sheets of living flame, and the sky is bright with the glare. The guard at the cabin door near the foot of the hill had fled with the rest, and now directly in the face of the fire the four men who had been confined therein ran excitedly towards the British. Strange to tell, they reached the lines in perfect safety. Then again the bayonets are fixed and the British dash forward; in rushing through they get confused, but Plenderleth rallies them, and on towards the cannon they push; up the hill they spring, and

"Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turned in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonderd.

Three cannons and tumblers, with thirty men and one of the generals, were taken in this fierce charge by Plenderleth. Ogilvie had charged up towards Gage's, and had captured the other general while coming out of the house. At about the same time the two American generals were lost to their men, Vincent was lost to the British, and was supposed to be killed or wounded. Under these circumstances Col. Burns became leader of the Americans, and Harvey assumed command of the British. The 49th were on the hill pressing onward when Burns' cavalry assailed them, cut through the ranks, and drove them back down the hill. In changing so rapidly their positions at this time, the opposing sides became mixed, and more confusion prevailed. In this state of affairs nearly fifty of the 49th British regiment were taken prisoners, and a number of Americans were also taken by the British. The Americans now began to retire, which they did without pursuit. As it was getting daylight, Harvey thought it prudent to retire too, as day would soon discover to the enemy the

insufficiency of his force and probably incite them to renew a conflict which he was not able to keep up. As soon as day began to break Capt. Merritt was sent down to ascertain, if possible, what had become of the missing general. He arrived at the scene of the midnight carnage, and was viewing over the ground not thinking of the enemy, when he was accosted by an American sentinel under Gage's house with "Who goes there?" At this unexpected challenge he was about to surrender, as both his pistols were in the holsters, when he bethought himself of a ruse, and turning to the sentinel, and riding towards him inquired, "Who placed you there?" Supposing him to be one of their own officers the sentinel returned that he was put there by his captain who had just gone into the house with a party of men. The captain then asked him if he had found the British general yet, at the same time pulling out his pistol. At the sight of the weapon leveled at him, the sentinel dropped his gun and gave himself up. Just then a man, without any gun, ran down the hill. Capt. Merritt called him and he obeyed the summons. Thus securing the two prisoners unobserved by the party of men in the house, he took them off to the Heights, but found no trace of Vincent. A large body of the enemy reappeared on the battle field between seven and eight o'clock, and proceeded to destroy the provisions, carriages, spare arms, blankets, etc., which they could not take, and then retreated, leaving their own dead to be buried by the British. As they passed from the scene of their discomfiture, their band struck up the then popular air, "In My Cottage near the Wood," and to this lively tune the disordered army left the hamlet of Stony Creek forever.

They did not halt till they reached the 40-mile Creek, where they camped over night. But Sir James Yeo having sailed from Kingston on the 3rd, with his squadron for the purpose of annoying the enemy at the head of the Lake, appeared off this creek at daylight of the 7th. Being becalmed, it was impossible to get within range with the large vessels but the schooners Beresford and Sidney Smith were tugged up and commenced fire. This added to a panic caused by some Indians appearing on the brow of the mountain, and firing into the camp, caused the Americans (now reinforced by Generals Lewis and Boyd) to break camp and retreat to Fort George, leaving behind 500 tents, 100 stand of arms, 140 barrels of flour, and about 70 wounded men, who were duly taken care of. But the Americans met a severer loss in the destruction and capture of all the batteaux that were in co-operation with the land forces. Twelve of them were taken with all their contents by the Beresford, and the residue of five driven on shore, where their crews deserted them, and joined the flying army.

When Capt. Merritt returned to camp with-out the General, George Bradshaw and John Brant (a half-brother to the celebrated Joseph Brant) started again in search. They met him emerging from a side path, arrayed in a borrowed hat and on a borrowed horse. He had lost himself, he said, in the woods while the battle was going on; and in the general excitement lost hat, sword, and horse. On his return to camp he was greeted with loud cheers from his men, who had almost given him up as killed or taken prisoner.

The following is the statement given in an American account (Lossing's) as the return of killed and wounded at Stony Creek: the British had 23 killed, 100 wounded, and 55 missing. The Americans had 17 killed; 38 wounded, and 99 missing.

Somewhat at variance with this is Vincent's official report which says: "The action terminated before daylight, when three guns and one brass howitzer, with three tumbrels, two Brigadier-Generals, Chandler and Winder, first and second in command, and upwards of 100 officers and privates remained in our hands. * * * It would be an act of injustice were I to omit assuring your Excellency, that gallantry and discipline were never more conspicuous than during our late short action; and I feel the greatest satisfaction in assuring you that every officer and individual seemed anxious to rival each other in his efforts to support the honor of His Majesty's arms, and to maintain the high character of British troops. * * * General return of killed, wounded, and missing: 1 lieutenant, 3 sergeants, 19 rank and file, killed; 2 majors, 5 captains, 2 lieutenants, 1 ensign, 1 adjutant, 1 fort-major, 9 sergeants, 2 drummers, and 113 rank and file, wounded; 3 sergeants, and 52 rank and file, missing." A veteran, John Lee, who assisted in burying the dead, and *counted them himself*, disagrees with both, and affirms that there were buried that day sixty one men of both sides.

This loss in a half-hour's fight made a large gulf in 704 men. The severe loss on the British side is easily accounted for in the fact that they were exposed to the light of the camp fires where they suffered fearfully before they were prepared to return the fire. From the position of the dead and wounded next morning it was known that they lost as much from those two first volleys as in all the rest of the fight. Most of the Americans were wounded with bayonets. All the honor of this sharp and effectual repulse of an enemy outnumbering them four to one, is due to the decision, energy and judgment of Col. Harvey as the leader of a brave, active and faithful band of men.

Many came the next day to witness the scene of the engagement. Men, horses, guns, swords and baggage were strewn in every part of the ground. The old church was shattered and riddled with balls in every part and wore its marks of ill-usage down to the year 1820. The bodies of the dead were conveyed on an old wood sleigh to their graves, the settlers of the neighborhood assisting in the mournful task. Part of them were buried where some of them had slept, but the night before—on a projecting point of the hill east of the creek and a little distance north of the present road. The others—without distinction of country—slumber in the graveyard close to the spot whereon the old church stood. No stone is yet erected to perpetuate their memory or designate their sleeping place; but rebuking the descendants, two apple-trees stand patient sentinels over them, and as each sixth of June rolls round, shake the snowy laurels from their own heads to perfume and hallow their anniversary day! As their lives were arduous and warlike, so let their slumbers be light and peaceful—both friends and foes—and when they wake to the notes of the last, final bugle call, may they find the honored place in Paradise given to those who spend their life and blood in the good and noble cause of Country!

RESOLUTIONS

ADOPTED AT A PIC-NIC GATHERING HELD ON THE
BATTLE FIELD,

JUNE 5TH, 1889.

Resolved, That we regard with thankfulness the contentment, comfort and self-reliance of the people of this Dominion, which the freedom of our institutions and the bravery of our ancestors under Divine Providence have conferred upon us, and we gratefully acknowledge the moral and material support which in the past our Mother Country has ever willingly granted and secured to us in a great measure as the result of the glorious victory, the anniversary of which we now celebrate.

Resolved, That the Dominion Government be respectfully requested to grant a reasonable sum of money in aid of the erection of suitable monuments on the battle ground of Stony Creek and on Burlington Heights, in commemoration of the heroic bravery and self-sacrifice of the defenders of our country, and in grateful appreciation of the important results which the victory attending that battle has secured to us.

Resolved, That this meeting urge the importance of forming Pioneer and Historical societies throughout the Dominion, as a valuable and influential agency for the collection and preservation of the necessary materials for reliable histories of our country, and as an indication of the loyalty of the Canadian people to their country and their attachment to British laws and institutions.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Wentworth Pioneer and Historical Society be conveyed to Mr. William A. Nash for his kind permission to use his beautiful grounds and residence on this occasion.

The Wentworth Pioneer and Historical Society.

ORGANIZED JANUARY 1889.

OFFICERS FOR 1889.—Geo. H. Mills, Pres.; Hon. Arch. McKellar, 1st Vice-Pres.; J. E. O'Reilly, 2nd Vice-Pres.; John H. Land, Sec. and Treas.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.—F. M. Carpenter, Esq., M. P.; Lyman Moore, Esq.; H. C. Baker, Esq.; Major Henry McLaren; F. W. Fearman, Esq.; John Muir, Judge C.C.; J. W. Jones, Esq.; T. C. Mewburn, Esq.; Richard Bull, Esq.; T. H. Stinson, Esq.; John A. Barr, Esq.

